

Group Polarization in Disciplinary Panel's Decisions Among Teachers: An Analysis of Schools' Affiliation Differences

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The study examined group polarization in decision-making among teacher-members of disciplinary panels based on secondary school affiliations in Kenya. The pre-post with Nonequivalent Control Group design was used. A sample size comprised of 78 teacher-members of disciplinary panels in 10 secondary schools. Group polarization was measured with decision tasks from the Modified Choice Dilemma Questionnaire (Kogan & Wallach, 1964). A multivariate test was used to analyze the data. Findings indicated significant differences in group polarization in decisions among teachers on the bases of school affiliations were reported on the effect of behaviour problem regarding disciplinary tone. This finding implied that school affiliations play an important role in management of students' behavior problems. The study recommended that schools should provide training for school disciplinary panel members before they take up their roles in student behavior management.

Keywords. Group polarization, disciplinary panel's decision making, schools' affiliations.

Group decision making is a participative process where a group of individuals collectively analyze an issue or situation, consider, and evaluate alternative solutions, and select the best alternative solution (Proctor, 2011). Thus, groups are considered to make better decisions as compared to individual decisions since there is more knowledge, more alternative ideas, greater acceptance of decision taken, and greater understanding on issues and decision in groups (Gunnarsson, 2010). Schools' principals have increasingly adopted group decision making to be consultative in management of students' problems

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because decisions arrived at by a group of individuals is better than the decisions made by an individual (Aloka, 2012). Sackney and Dibski (1994) also noted that the majority of activities required to be carried out by principals needed to involve collaborative decision making. In most organizations, the managers have embraced group decision making to handle daily tasks that appear complex for an individual to decide on by themselves (Bell, Haplin, & Neill, 1996). According to Blase and Blase (1997), school principals have a major responsibility of using inclusive leadership in the day to day running of schools by involving teachers to help in decision making on various issues that affect the learners, parents, and other stakeholders of the school community.

Previous researches have indicated that there is a tendency for individuals in groups to make risky choices in their decisions as compared to individuals for similar tasks. Thus, when small groups make decisions, there is a likelihood of phenomenon known as group polarization. Sieber and Ziegler (2019) define group polarization as a change in individual preferences from pre-group discussion to post-group discussion in the direction which is favored according to individuals' average pre-discussion preferences. During group deliberations, some group made decisions appear to be riskier as compared to the pre-individual's initial decision on the task while, at certain times, the group decisions are less risky as compared to the pre-group individually made decisions (Wyland, 2007). Thus, group polarization occurs when the group decisions appear to be risky as compared to the individual pre-group decisions, which are cautious. Risky decisions occur when faced with the same decision problem, individuals within a group adopt a riskier course of action, compared with the decisions they would make outside the group; while, cautious decisions occur when individuals adopt safer alternatives in their choices during deliberations (Aloka, 2020).

Previous studies on existence of group polarization leading to either risky or cautious shifts exists (Barber & Odean, 2000). The evidence of risky shifts phenomenon has been systemically reported in psychological reviews for some time now, with the earliest one being Stoner (as cited in Aloka, 2020) who researched on the risky shift phenomenon. Other studies by Wallach, Kogan, and Bemis, (1964) and Aloka (2012) adopted the Stoner's (1968) Choice Dilemma Questionnaire (CDQ) to study group polarization. Moreover, Stoner (as cited in Aloka, 2020) later argued that during group deliberations, there is a tendency of individual members to shift their decisions and realign them with the decision that is preferred by the other group members. Cialdini and Goldstein (2004) reiterate that

in most cases when individuals deliberate in a group task, those who are not sure of an option required as a decision would easily rely on the direction that is taken by the majority of group members regarding the decision about the given task. Jagau and Offerman, (2018) also added that in most cases group decisions are risky because members lose their sense of responsibility on the task under deliberation. Moreover, Charness and Jackson (2009) reported that individuals always make cautious decisions when involved in financial decision making as compared to groups that tend to risky options. Jagau, and Offerman, (2018) noted that group polarization occurs during group deliberations because of social conformity by some members who change their decisions due to pressure from the other group members' opinions.

Group polarization could be attributed to social comparison among group members. One of the social psychology theories that explain group polarization is the Social Comparison Theory (Festinger as cited in Sieber & Ziegler, 2019) which assumes that people are motivated to appraise their abilities and opinions and; therefore, tend to make comparisons with other persons. Social comparison mechanism occurs among members during the group deliberations and it affect the thoughts and behaviours (Corcoran, Crusius, & Mussweiler, 2011). Mussweiler and Epstude (2009) asserted that social comparison in groups change people's thoughts, feelings, motivations, and their behaviours. The processes of social comparison in small group settings make the individual members to shift and present themselves desirably to the other members (Schmalisch, Bratiotis, & Muroff, 2010). Social comparisons in small groups can take three forms; namely, lateral, upward, and downward (Suls & Wheeler, 2012). First, lateral comparison result from the way individuals compare their opinions with those of the colleagues of similar age and teaching experiences of others; while, downward individual members in a group with low self-esteem could use comparison. On the other hand, upward comparison could mostly be used by younger or less experienced group members as they seek opinions of more senior group members regarding the group task being addressed (Aloka, 2012).

Previous research on group polarization phenomenon exists but most of the literature are in other settings and not school related. In addition, few studies available on educational settings are related to literature on decision making, but not on group polarization. For example, Mostert and Gulseven (2020) suggested that female respondents perceive themselves to be less emotion-neutral, a finding that is amplified in the education sector. Thus, female teachers are

more likely to make emotional decisions. Moreover, Hechtlinger and Gati (2019) showed gender differences in the strength of dysfunctional career decision-making beliefs, as well as in the workshop's effectiveness in reducing them. In addition, Moreno, Cervelló, and Martínez-Galindo (2007) showed that since the female learners appear to be more disciplined as compared to male learners; hence, there are differences on ways by which teachers' make decisions on their respective discipline issues in school. Thus, regarding disciplinary decisions boys would require harsher penalties as compared to girls. Stephenson (2011) reported that there are significant gender differences with respect to disciplinary decision making for the students because male learners are found to be involved in more behavioral problems as compared to the female learners. Another research study (Rodriguez, 2002) also reported that most female teachers make similar disciplinary decisions to both male and female learners when the behavior was not an aggressive one. In another study, Hill and Lynch (1983) reiterate that there are different decisions when handling male learners as compared to female learners because girls are more vulnerable to be abused by boys. Robinson (1992) reported that most male teachers tend to make risky decisions on male learners due to their aggressive tendencies.

Donatelli and Schnees (2010) inferred that learners who are in single-sex schools have few behavioral problems as compared to those in mixed gender schools and decisions on the behaviors of learners are different depending on the school affiliation in which they are studying. Brutsaert (2002) further noted that there are differences in how different school affiliations handle misbehaviors among learners because in boys' only school or girls' only schools there is more emphasis on strict behavior management as compared to learners in mixed schools. Another study carried out in USA by Fabes, Pahlke, Galligan, and Borders (2015) argued that single-sex schools also have their own disciplinary facing learners. Gurian (1996) reported that learners in single-sex schools are usually well behaved as compared to the learners in mixed schools. In a related study by Smithers and Robinson (2006), it has been deliberated that in mixed gender schools there are few behavior problems among learners when compared to the learners in single-sex schools and this affect nature and type of decisions adopted by teachers to manage behavior problems. Another study by Malik (2013) reported that most learners in single sex boys or girls' schools are generally well behaved and they have better personalities as compared to the learners in the mixed gender schools.

Singh (2010) found that there are differences among teachers when making disciplinary decisions and male teachers tend to make

risky decisions; while, female teachers mostly make cautious decisions when handling students' behavior problems in schools. In Nigeria, Chiedu (2015) revealed that teachers use utmost decisions in determining the mode of punishment that they give to learners who display behaviour problems in schools. Similarly, Ikoya (2009) also found that more intensive disciplinary procedures were applied to students in boys' only single schools as compared to those in girls' only schools. In Kenya, Achoka and Barasa (2013) revealed that the conversion from mixed gender to boys' only school or girls' only schools yielded positive effects on girls' discipline. Thus, students in mixed schools were better behaved as compared to those in single gender only schools whether boys or girls only schools. Another study by Luti-Mallei and Gakunga (2016) reported that there are varying disciplinary decisions used by teachers to manage behavior problems depending on the school type because learners the male learners are always found with more behavior problems as compared to the female learners in all school categories. Aloka and Bojuwoye (2013) revealed that there are significant gender differences among teachers when handling learners' behavior problems in schools, thus in boys' schools, teachers mostly make risky decisions; while, in girls only schools, teachers make cautious decisions regarding students' behavior problems. Luti (2015) also reported that there are gender differences among teachers on how they manage students' behavior problems in schools and boys are mostly found in behavior problems as compared to the girls in all school categories.

Schools strive to provide the best environment that enhances overall development of all students. The main aim of any school disciplinary practice is to ensure that all learners are assisted to achieve their goals and to enhance behavioral development which would later after school translate to best citizens (Poulou, 2011). Aloka (2012) reiterates that schools in Kenya are guided by an Education Act to constitute school disciplinary panels which are meant to provide guidelines and handle all students' misbehaviors that occur within school with an aim of arriving at the best decisions that may help students to reform from undesired behaviours. This organ, the school disciplinary panel, being a social group, operates as small groups made by teachers appointed by the various principals with responsibility of student behavior management. The group decisions made by the disciplinary panel members are assumed to be more beneficial in terms of diversity of opinions and in-depth analysis of knowledge and thus are believed to be best decisions as compared to those made by a collection of individuals or school principal alone (Aloka, 2012). Since, there are three main affiliations in which

secondary schools in Kenya are grouped as girls' only, boys' only or mixed gender types, there are implications in terms how the students in these affiliations of schools respond to behavior problems. Thus, it is assumed that the members of disciplinary panels in the various school affiliations could be using the risky or cautious decisions differently to address the students behaviours presented to them during disciplinary hearings. This could lead to group polarization in the decisions made by the teachers during disciplinary hearings in schools.

An important rationale for the study is that most previous studies have examined the group phenomenon among subjects in business fields, experimental set ups and psychology, but very scanty information was available in the school context which was the focus of the present study. In as much as the results from previous studies demonstrated the existence of group polarization, it was not clear whether or not this could be experienced among teacher-members of the school disciplinary panels. Group polarization phenomenon of small social groups exists in many aspects of human life and has been researched in disciplines such as social psychology, law and business (Gutkin & Nemeth, 1997). However, Eide and Showalter (2001) and Freedman (2007) noted that research on group polarization in education contexts has been rather very limited. One study on group polarization at an American primary school level by Freedman (2007) investigated decisions, by a group of teachers, on grade retention and promotion. There is scarcity of studies in the literature on school committee decisions especially school committees like school disciplinary panels which rely on consensus decisions of the panels for the management of students' behaviours. Previous studies only reported the existence of the phenomenon of group polarization in committees or small groups of teachers or students set up to make decisions or choices but none of these studies reported on the variables of the teachers or the students which could have influenced the group polarization. The significance of the present study could be with regard to the utility to which the information as to the existence of group polarization in the secondary schools' disciplinary panels could be put to. Therefore, it is important to study the group phenomenon among teachers as it might affect the decisions made during disciplinary hearing sessions, which in turn affect students destinies. The evidence of existence of group polarization in disciplinary panel process and of the factors influencing group polarization can provide useful information to education and school authorities in Kenya on better ways of managing the interactions among panel members during disciplinary hearings to be more

effective in enhancing the quality of decisions. To summarize, the best disciplinary panel hearing decisions would make the schools develop students behaviorally to be good leaders who are well equipped with good leadership skills for later use in life.

The main aim of the study was to examine differences in the group polarization in teachers' disciplinary decisions in the three affiliations of secondary schools in Kenya. Thus, the major objective of the study is to determine differences in the group polarization in teachers' disciplinary decisions on the bases of affiliations of secondary schools in Kenya. The following hypothesis is phrased that:

H1. Group polarization positively predicts teachers' disciplinary decisions on the basis of affiliations of secondary schools in Kenya.

Method

Research Design

A quasi-experimental design, specifically the pre-post with non-equivalent control group design is used in the study. The non-equivalent groups design is the most frequently used quasi-experimental approach used in the social sciences (Handley, Lyles, McCulloch, & Cattamanchi, 2018) because it helps to identify comparison groups that are as similar as possible to the target population (White & Sabarwal, 2014). There are 10 secondary schools which were randomly chosen and each had varying number of teacher-members of disciplinary panels which make them pre-post with non-equivalent control groups. The members of the disciplinary panels involved in the study have been randomly sampled and each were given questionnaires which helped to ascertain their pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions regarding students with behavior problems.

Participants

The sample size comprised of 78 teacher-members of disciplinary panel groups in secondary schools in Rongo Sub-County of Kenya. The inclusion criteria in obtaining the study sample was that only teachers who had underwent orientation and school training on students' behaviour management were involved. On the other hand, the exclusion criteria were that teachers who had not been trained and given orientation on students' behavior management in schools were not involved in the study. The sampling of teachers took into consideration of factors such as gender, age, years of teaching

experiences, and school affiliations. Regarding the age distribution of teachers, 21 (26.9%) were in age range of 24 to 29 years' age group ($SD = 1.45$), 28 (35.8%) were in the 30-39 years' age group ($SD = 0.98$), 14 (17.9%) were in the 40-49 years' age group ($SD = 1.76$), and finally, 15 (19.2%) were in the 50-59 years' age group ($SD = 1.65$). The mean age of teachers was 38.76 years and the minimum age was 24 years, while the maximum was 59 years. Proportional sampling technique was also used to obtain the members of disciplinary panels depending on school affiliations as 16 (20.5%) teachers from girls' only schools, 23 (29.5%) teachers from boys' only schools, and 39 (50%) teachers from mixed gender schools. On gender representation, there were 45 (57.7%) male teacher-members; while, 33(42.3%) were female teacher-members of the disciplinary panels. On the teaching experiences among teacher-members, 14 (17.9%) had 1-5 years, 5 (6.41%) had 11-15 years, 6 (7.6%) had 16-20 years, 8 (10.3%) had 21-25 years of teaching experiences, and finally, 12 (15.4%) had 26-30 years of teaching experiences. On the educational qualifications of the teachers, 12 (15.4%) had diploma, 60 (76.9%) had Bachelor's degree; while, 6 (7.6%) had Masters degrees in Education.

Measures

One main instrument along with demographic sheet were used to collect the data in this study.

Modified Choice Dilemma Questionnaire (MDCQ; Kogan & Wallach, 1964). The MCDQ was used to collect information from the teacher-members of panels on their decisions before and after the disciplinary hearing meetings in schools. The Choice Dilemma Questionnaire originally developed by Stoner (as cited in Aloka, 2020) is primarily used to estimate changes in pre-group to post-group decisions (Ronay & Kim, 2006) in small social groups like disciplinary panels leading to group polarization phenomenon (Appelt, Milch, Handgraaf, & Weber, 2011). The original Choice Dilemma Questionnaire was modified in accordance to the Kenyan Context. The MDCQ had four factors on which the teachers indicated the pre and post-group disciplinary decisions on students' behaviours being investigated. The four factors on which disciplinary decisions were made include; behaviour characteristics of the offending student, type of the behavior problem, effects of the behavior on other students, and effect of behaviour problem on the disciplinary tone (Aloka, 2012). Each factor had a Choice-Dilemma where teachers had an option to

choose from among the 1-10 chances to recommend a decision regarding students' offence that is presented during disciplinary hearing for deliberation (Freedman, 2007). The options of 1 in 10 chances, 2 in 10 chances or 3 in 10 chances on a particular factor of disciplinary decision making would lead to a cautious decision, while selection of options of 7 in 10 chances, 8 in 10 chances or 9 in 10 chances a decision would lead to a risky decision on the students' offender. Validity of the MCDQ was ensured by two Kenyan Psychologists who are specialists in group dynamics; whereas, reliability of the MCDQ was determined using Cronbach alpha of .78 was reported in the present study.

Procedure

Ethical clearance was first sought from Kenyan Ministry of Education. To access the selected schools, permission was acquired from the principals of the various schools. Ethical issues such as anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation among research participants were adhered to. First, anonymity of the research participants was ascertained by using pseudonyms in questionnaires instead of names; while, confidentiality was ensured that the questionnaires were issued within the classrooms and each of the teachers were given consent forms to sign to ensure voluntary participation in the study. All the teacher-members of the disciplinary panel groups in the selected secondary schools were involved in the study. Each disciplinary panel consisting of either 7 or 8 teachers was considered as one group. The extraneous variables were controlled by carrying out the study on government sponsored secondary schools and also ensuring that similar procedures were followed during the disciplinary hearing processes in all the selected schools. On the day of data collection, the researcher visited schools just before disciplinary hearings began and then administered MDCQ to the teachers to indicate their pre-group decisions on the disciplinary case presented to them. The teachers were expected to choose their chances of making a decision. Then, teachers went for disciplinary hearing meeting which lasted for one hour on average. Later, after disciplinary hearing, the teachers filled in new MDCQ where they indicated their post-group decisions regarding the disciplinary problem where they made pre-group decisions. In the MDCQ, the teachers made both pre-group and post-group decisions on four aspects. Each of the participants took approximately between 30minutes to fill the MCD questionnaire.

Results

Data from pre and post group response scores from teachers are compared to indicate whether the nature of decisions before disciplinary hearing and those after the meeting are cautious or risky. The mean scores of the pre and post group response scores have been computed. Since, there are three school affiliations, and the dependent variable that is group polarization in decisions is multidimensional consisting of four aspects on which decisions are made; therefore, a multivariate analysis is used to ascertain whether or not there is group polarization in decisions among teachers during disciplinary hearing on the bases of the three school affiliations.

Table 1

Pre-Group and Post-Group Decisions Among Teachers on the Basis of School Affiliations

Factors on Which Disciplinary Decisions Are Made	School Affiliations	Number of Teachers	Pre-Group Mean Decision Scores	Post-Group Mean Decision Scores	Differences Between Post-Group & Pre-Group Decision Scores
Nature of students' behaviour problem	Boys' Only School	23	7.11	3.54	3.57
	Girls' Only Schools	16	3.44	6.84	3.40
	Mixed Gender Schools	39	7.50	4.10	3.40
Nature of offending student	Boys' Only Schools	23	2.59	7.51	4.92
	Girls' Only Schools	16	4.64	8.12	3.48
	Mixed Gender Schools	39	7.43	3.96	3.47
Effects of behavior on victim/other students	Boys' Only Schools	23	5.44	6.40	0.96
	Girls' Only Schools	16	5.16	5.49	0.33
	Mixed Gender Schools	39	4.98	7.41	2.43
Effect of behaviour problem on disciplinary tone	Boys' Only Schools	23	4.44	7.98	3.54
	Girls' only schools	16	3.48	7.56	4.08
	Mixed gender schools	39	7.58	3.54	4.04

To examine the differences in the group polarization in teachers' decisions of the three affiliations of secondary schools, the pre and post group disciplinary decisions by teachers on the MCDQ in each of the school affiliations have been obtained. Thereafter, descriptive analyses and the use of measures of central tendency such as means are used to analyze the pre-group and post-group decisions to ascertain whether or not group polarization occurred during the disciplinary meetings in schools. The results of descriptive statistics and means obtained from pre and post group scores on decisions is presented in Table 1.

The pre-group decision means scores on decisions by teachers presented in Table 1 indicate that the decisions are mostly cautious before the disciplinary hearing meetings. However, generally, most decisions shifted to riskier ones after disciplinary hearings, indicating that group polarization phenomenon is evident among teachers in disciplinary panels. The results on the differences between post-group-pre-group decision scores indicate that the teachers in mixed gender schools have greatest shifts in their decisions after disciplinary hearings, while the teachers in single gender schools reported little shifts in their decisions.

To ascertain whether there are significant differences in group polarization in decisions among teachers on the four factors of disciplinary decision making and on the bases of the three affiliations of schools, the Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) is computed. According to Stevens (2002), there are four multivariate tests within MANOVA namely; the Pillai's trace test, Wilk's lambda, Hotelling's tests, and Roy's largest root. The Wilk's lambda test is the most recommended of the four multivariate tests because of its high accuracy as compared to other tests (Howell, 2002). The MANOVA test results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

MANOVA Test Results on Group Polarization in Decisions Among Teachers on the Basis of Three School Affiliations

Effects		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	p
School	Pillai's Trace	0.21	2.18	8.00	146.00	.32
Affiliations	Hotelling's Trace	0.25	2.22	8.00	142.00	.29
	Roy's Largest Root	0.21	3.75	4.00	73.00	.18
	Wilk's Lambda	0.79	2.20	8.00	144.00	.30

In the Table 2, the multivariate analysis indicates that there are nonsignificant differences in group polarization in decisions among teachers on the basis of three school affiliations; thereby, the research hypothesis has not been supported.

As a follow up to the MANOVA results, tests of between-subjects is carried out to establish differences in group polarization in decisions by teachers and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Between Subjects Differences on Group Polarization in Decisions by Teachers on the Basis of School Affiliations

Source	Factors Associated With Disciplinary Decision Making	Type III	df	M	F	p
Corrected Model	The nature of the students' behaviour problem	12.35	2	6.17	1.74	.18
	The nature of offending student	18.41	2	9.20	1.78	.18
	Effects of the behavior on victim/other students	28.18	2	14.09	3.07	.05
	effect of behaviour problem on the disciplinary tone	9.20	2	4.60	1.51	.23
Intercept	The nature of the students' behaviour problem	767.79	1	767.79	217.27	.00
	The nature of offending student	588.14	1	588.14	113.94	.00
	Effects of the behavior on victim/other students	737.84	1	737.84	160.97	.00
	effect of behaviour problem on the disciplinary tone	591.46	1	591.46	194.06	.00
School affiliation	The nature of the students' behaviour problem	12.35	2	6.17	1.74	.18
	The nature of offending student	18.41	2	9.21	1.78	.17

Continued...

Source	Factors Associated With Disciplinary Decision Making	Type III	<i>df</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Error	Effects of the behavior on victim/other students	28.18	2	14.09	3.07	.04
	effect of behaviour problem on the disciplinary tone	9.20	2	4.60	1.51	.23
	The nature of the students' behaviour problem	265.03	75	3.53		
	The nature of offending student	387.12	75	5.16		
	Effects of the behavior on victim/other students	343.76	75	4.58		
Total	Effect of behaviour problem on the disciplinary tone	228.58	75	3.04		
	The nature of the students' behaviour problem	1212.00	78			
	The nature of offending student	1144.00	78			
	Effects of the behavior on victim/other students	1252.00	78			
	effect of behaviour problem on the disciplinary tone	964.00	78			
Corrected Total	The nature of the students' behaviour problem	277.38	77			
	The nature of offending student	405.54	77			
	Effects of the behavior on victim/other students	371.95	77			
	Effect of behaviour problem on the disciplinary tone	237.79	77			

The results of tests of between subjects presented in Table 3 indicate that there are significant differences in group polarization in decisions among teachers reported on the factor of effect of behaviour problem on the disciplinary tone ($F(2, 75) = 3.07; p < .05$). This

indicates that group polarization in decisions occurred significantly among teachers when handling students' behavior problems on the effect of behaviour problem on the disciplinary tone. This finding implies that school affiliations play an important role in management of students' behavior problems. The results also indicated that there are nonsignificant differences in group polarization among teachers in the three school affiliations on factors such as the nature of the students' behaviour problem, effects of the behavior on victim/other students, and nature of offending student. Scheffe's Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons test is used to explain significant differences in group polarization in decisions among teachers.

Table 4

Scheffe's Post Hoc on Group Polarization in Decisions Among Teachers on the Effect of Behaviour Problem on the Disciplinary Tone

Factor	<i>i</i>	<i>j</i>	<i>i-j</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
Effect of Behaviour Problem On Disciplinary Tone	Boys' Only School	Mixed Gender School	1.50	1.24	.00
		Girls' Only School	0.52	1.31	.29
	Mixed Gender School	Boys' Only School	1.50	1.24	.00
		Girls' Only School	2.02	1.41	.00
	Girls' Only School	Boys' Only School	0.52	1.31	.29
		Mixed Gender School	2.02	1.41	.00

In the Table 4, the results indicate that significant differences in group polarization in decisions by teachers are found when the decisions of the participants in the mixed gender schools are compared with those of single-sex girls' and boys' only schools. The finding thus indicates that the school affiliations of the teachers contributed to differences in group polarization in decisions. These different extents of group polarization among teachers could be attributed to the differences in the manner in which each affiliation viewed the disciplinary tones of the schools.

Discussion

This study was undertaken to examine the differences in the group polarization in teachers' decisions of the three affiliations of secondary schools. The results indicated that group polarization

phenomenon was evident among teachers in disciplinary panels because there were shifts from pre-group and post-group decisions. The results further indicated that the teachers mixed gender schools had greatest shifts in their decisions after disciplinary hearings, while the teachers in single gender schools reported little shifts in their decisions. There were significant differences in group polarization in decisions among teachers on the factor of effect of behaviour problem on the disciplinary tone. This indicates that group polarization in decisions occurred significantly among teachers when handling students' behavior problems on the effect of behaviour problem on the disciplinary tone. The results also indicate that significant differences in group polarization in decisions by teachers when the decisions of the participants in the mixed gender schools are compared with those of single-sex girls' and boys' only schools. The findings thus indicate that the school affiliations of the teachers contributed to differences in group polarization in decisions. The results of the present study indicate that teachers make different disciplinary decisions regarding student offenders in schools depending on school affiliations. This finding agrees with Mostert and Gulseven (2020) study which suggest that female respondents perceive themselves to be less emotion-neutral, a finding that is amplified in the education sector.

Similarly, Hechtlinger and Gati (2019) also reported gender differences in the strength of dysfunctional career decision-making beliefs, as well as in the workshop's effectiveness in reducing them. This finding also concurs with Moreno et al. (2007) that there are differences on ways by which teachers' make decisions on their respective discipline issues in school because boys would require harsher penalties as compared to girls. Similarly, Stephenson (2011) argued that there are significant gender differences with respect to disciplinary decision making for the students because male learners are found in more behavior problems as compared to the female learners. In agreement, Malik (2013) reiterate that most learners in single-sex boys or girls' schools are generally well behaved, and they have better personalities as compared to the learners in the mixed gender schools. Another study by Aloka and Bojuwoye (2013) also agreed that there are significant gender differences among teachers when handling learners' behavior problems in schools, thus in boys' schools, teachers mostly make risky decisions while in girls only schools, teachers make cautious decisions regarding students' behavior problems. Moreover, Fabes et al. (2015) also found that single-sex schools also have their own disciplinary issues facing learners and teachers have different behavior management decisions to manage them. Finally, Luti (2015) also argued that there are gender

differences among teachers on how they manage students' behavior problems in schools and boys are mostly found in behavior problems as compared to the girls in all school categories.

However, the findings of the present study indicated that there are nonsignificant differences in group polarization among teachers in the three school affiliations on the factors such as the nature of the students' behaviour problem, effects of the behavior on victim/other students and nature of offending student. This indicates that some school factors did not influence shifts in disciplinary decisions among teachers. This finding is contrary to Achoka and Barasa (2013) study which revealed that students in mixed schools are better behaved as compared to those in single gender only schools whether boys or girls only schools. Similarly, Chiedu (2015) also disagreed that teachers use almost decisions in determining the mode of punishment that they give to learners who display behaviour problems in schools. Luti-Mallei and Gakunga (2016) also disagreed that there are varying disciplinary decisions used by teachers to manage behavior problems depending on the school type because learners the male learners are always found with more behavior problems as compared to the female learners in all school categories. These results are very new to Kenyan literature on the group polarization on decision making with a focus on school affiliations differences. Most of the existing literature on group polarization in Kenyan context exists in other fields such as psychology and business fields but very scanty literature is available in the education field. In this context, the results of the present study are very crucial to the Kenyan teachers as they inform decision making mechanisms during disciplinary hearing meetings in secondary schools. From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that affiliations of teachers' influence group polarization indecision making among teachers in secondary schools.

Limitations and Suggestions

One of the limitations of the study is that only secondary schools within Rongo sub-county in Kenya were sampled, and therefore, schools outside the sub-county may possess different environmental characteristics. However, most public schools in Kenya have common features including teacher training, learner distributions and programmes. Therefore, the researcher's belief is that the findings would still be highly representative of the situation in secondary schools in Kenya. However, future researchers could utilize these results to investigate the phenomenon of group polarization as it affects male panel members when dealing with problems of girls.

Implications

The findings of the current study would be effective and useful for various stakeholders; for example, school principals could organize for training of teachers on group decision making because the group polarization phenomenon was evident among teachers in all the disciplinary panel groups. This would equip teachers with skills of group decision making in disciplinary panels. In addition, the findings may also be helpful to Schools Boards of Management to consider the composition of broad based disciplinary panels which should be reflected the demographic composition of all stakeholders. This is suggesting that teachers should not be the only stakeholders making up a school disciplinary panel, because while it is recognized that teachers are more in contact with student behaviour problems in schools, the school is not and cannot be the only place where solution to student behaviour problems should be procured.

Conclusion

Overall, this study documented that group polarization in decisions was evident among teachers during disciplinary panel hearings irrespective of the affiliations of schools. The findings of this study are quite important because it brings new knowledge to how group polarization influences decision making among teachers in schools in the disciplinary hearing processes. This study brings to fore a phenomenon that has received little attention in the education field and the findings add to literature in schools. In addition to this, it is pragmatic to conclude that group polarization exists among teacher-members of schools disciplinary panels irrespective of the schools' affiliations. Teachers should therefore pay more attention to the dynamics that lead to decision making in the disciplinary hearing processes in schools.

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